Testimony Submitted by
Michael Angus
General Counsel of Fox Interactive Media
to the
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

"Making the Internet Safe for Kids: The Role of
ISP's and Social Networking Sites"

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Stupak and Members of the Committee, my name is Michael Angus and I am the general counsel of Fox Interactive Media, the parent company of MySpace. I want to thank you for inviting us here today to address concerns about Internet safety and to discuss how we can collectively protect younger users on the Internet.

Safety and security have been a priority for MySpace prior to the acquisition by Fox, and continue to remain a top priority at the highest levels of the company. We take seriously our responsibility to provide a safe and well-lit space for our members not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it also makes good business sense -- it is what our community and advertisers demand.

Our members want a safe space within which they can freely connect with one another, express themselves, share viewpoints, and explore culture. In that sense, as in many others, MySpace is a community much like the offline world. The best defense against those who would do us harm – whether on the Internet or in any public place – is to better understand the potential dangers and take active measures to protect yourself. If every person applies time-tested offline safety lessons to their online experiences, whether on MySpace or elsewhere, the Internet really becomes a much safer place for all. However, just as with any community, when a crime occurs online, we need to ensure that we arm law enforcement with the appropriate tools, knowledge, resources and consistent laws to identify, prosecute, and bring these criminals to justice.

As we have grown from a small site with a thousand users to now tens of millions, the challenges to meet safety concerns have grown. We are fully committed to meeting them head-on, and we continue to pursue a multi-pronged approach to Internet safety which

includes providing safety technologies, partnering with education and safety advocacy experts, and supporting law enforcement in their investigations.

Online Safety Features:

Safety online begins with safety features and safety tools for all of our users. We approach this challenge by employing safety technologies that help protect teens from potential harm and inappropriate content and provide all members with tools they need to help protect themselves.

We employ safety features specifically for younger teen users to help provide them with a safer environment. We have always set younger teen users' profiles to "private" by default, meaning that no one can view their profiles unless the younger teen user grants permission or overrides the default privacy setting. If that setting is overridden, the user will be presented with the safety tips yet again and will be required to confirm that they wish to change the profile from "private." And even if that default setting is changed, the profile is still only viewable by users under 18 and the "friends" of the user.

Just last week, we implemented additional safety features to help protect our younger teen users. In addition to our current features, we now require that all users over 18 must know either the email address or first and last name of the member in order to connect to a user who is 14 or 15. We will continue to identify further methods to provide a safer environment for our younger teen users.

Also, we continue to expand the safety tools we provide for all of our members. We now allow members of any age to set their profiles to private, allowing only friends within their private network to view their profile, such as information about personal interests and friends. Of course, we still recommend to users that, regardless of their privacy settings, they not post particular personal information that would help someone with bad motives to find them in the offline world. Just as you would not hand out your address or phone number to a group of strangers, we remind all users that information they make available over the Internet is broadly accessible.

We employ state-of-the-art technology to help protect our community and we are constantly seeking, testing, and implementing new safety products. We recently developed proprietary technology to screen images on MySpace to ensure that we are quickly eradicating images that do not meet our community standards. In addition, MySpace is providing further protections by instituting new technologies that prevent users under the age of 18 from seeing advertising that is inappropriate for their age group.

As safety technologies for the online space improve, we continue to explore further safety enhancements for our site to help protect members from inappropriate content and to provide members with the tools needed to protect themselves. Age verification, which at this stage is a form of identity verification, is one proposal that has been suggested to prevent predators from connecting with unsuspecting teens. We have met with numerous companies in search of a technology solution that would provide effective age

verification. While we have not found an effective solution to date, we continue to evaluate all available age verification technologies, as well as other technology approaches that will help to protect younger users.

Our users have helped us a great deal by reporting content that violates our policies. Partnering with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, we now provide a direct link to the CyberTipLine, which allows users to directly report images they suspect might be related in any way to child exploitation directly to the National Center, which then contacts the appropriate law enforcement agency to investigate.

Education of Members, Parents and Educators:

In addition to providing safety features and tools, educating users, parents, educators and school administrators about safe Internet usage is also a significant component of our efforts to foster a safer Internet. Our partners in safety have worked with us to provide education tools for all these audiences. We believe that one of the best things that we can do for users is to teach them to protect themselves online just as they would in the real world. And we are seeking help from parents, teachers and others to help communicate this message. We include a link to clear, common-sense safety tips on every page within our website. These tips are a must-read as part of the registration process for every user under 18, and we have separately communicated these tips to each user under 18 as a message in their Inbox. In addition, we include a separate set of safety tips for parents. We emphasize that the most important thing that parents can do is to engage in a dialogue with their teens about Internet usage, and we provide links to sites that help them do this. Also, we provide parents with step-by-step instructions on how to remove their teen's profile and include links to free software that enables them to limit access to the Internet, including blocking MySpace.

Additionally, we have created a Parents' Guide to further educate parents about safe Internet usage and how to talk to their teens about safe Internet usage, which will be distributed before the beginning of the coming school year. We are also in the process, working with major educational organizations, of creating an Educators' Guide and curriculum development tools to provide educators and school administrators with the tools to teach smart and safe web practices.

Partnerships with Safety Experts, Government and Law Enforcement:

Finally, we view Internet safety as a collective priority and universal responsibility for all of us involved in the Internet – businesses, government, law enforcement and users. The Internet has become a powerful, global means of distributing information and communicating. The issues we face as a social networking site are not new, but they have become more focused and concentrated, if for no other reasons than the advent of broadband and increased usage of the Internet as a communications tool. Because of the importance of these issues and the many different viewpoints on Internet safety and security, we have sought input from and forged relationships with a variety of groups to

address safety issues collectively. We believe that this will result in a safer Internet for everyone.

From our early relationship with Wired Safety to our close partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), we are reaching out to those with expertise in areas of child protection and Internet safety. In collaboration with the NCMEC and the Ad Council, News Corporation (the parent company of Fox Interactive Media) and MySpace have engaged in the largest-ever Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign on Internet safety. These PSAs are featured repeatedly across all Fox properties, including online, radio, print, network and cable channels. These PSAs can be viewed at: http://www.adcouncil.org/default.aspx?id=56.

Just last week, as part of our effort to better educate ourselves on online safety we participated in NCMEC's Dialogue on Social Networking. This was an effort by NCMEC to bring together safety experts to discuss the concerns associated with social networking sites and what steps could be taken to address Internet safety. We look at this event as a major step in our ongoing dialogue with experts to help guide us as we work through these important safety issues, implement more safety features, and engage in broader educational efforts.

In addition, we have a history of cooperation with law enforcement agencies throughout the country and are frequently praised for our assistance and cooperation. To assist law enforcement in their investigations, we have created a dedicated hotline that is staffed 24/7 and a Law Enforcement Guide that has been widely disseminated to educate law enforcement about MySpace and to instruct them on how to process subpoena and information requests relating to MySpace.

As you probably know, we have been in contact with numerous State Attorneys General and have been working with them to address safety concerns inherent in the Internet and in social networking. Many of our recent changes are the product of discussions with them as well as with this Subcommittee.

To continue to strengthen our existing partnerships and to build new ones, we recently hired Hemanshu Nigam as our Chief Security Officer. Mr. Nigam has sixteen years of safety and security experience, including his work as a former Federal prosecutor who specialized in crimes against children. He is currently presenting at the annual meeting of the National Association of Attorneys General to continue our ongoing safety dialogue.

Good Things:

Finally, I would like to take a moment to talk about the good that comes from social networking sites like MySpace. While our members are certainly connecting over new music, films, comedies, and other popular culture, they are also working to make the world a better place.

MySpace has nearly 18,000 groups dedicated to Government and Politics, more than 11,000 groups devoted to Non-Profit and Philanthropic activities, and 67,000 groups focused on Religion and Beliefs.

In the Chairman's and Congressman Burgess' home state of Texas, a doctor created Operation Helmet which is sending equipment upgrade kits to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan to provide additional protection to our troops on the front lines. Operation Helmet is spreading the word and raising money through their more than one thousand friends on MySpace, and has even received praise from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

In Congressman Pickering's home state of Mississippi, MySpace members were instrumental in lining up temporary guest housing for evacuees after Hurricane Katrina, and we are currently donating promotional support to a 501(c)3 that is rebuilding a Boys' and Girls' Club in Gulfport.

In Congressman Waxman's home state of California, the Surfrider Foundation is using MySpace to build a network of friends committed to keeping our oceans and beaches clean and safe.

Even candidates for Congress are using MySpace to educate voters about the issues, register constituents to vote, and ensure they have a way to get to the polls on Election Day.

All over the country, we are seeing good works happening through MySpace and through its users.

Mr. Chairman, I fully appreciate that we need to address the safety challenges posed by the Internet, and I look forward to answering your questions on that subject. Keeping the Internet safe is a top priority for us as well as a shared responsibility for all of us. That is why we are creating lasting partnerships with leading child safety organizations, law enforcement, and government agencies. It is why we are working hard to educate our members, parents and educators. And, it is why we are actively engaged in protecting our younger members through our policies and technology tools. The same rules that we as parents teach our teens about how to be safe in the real world must be applied online. I look forward to answering any questions that you or Members of the Committee may have.

Thank you.